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## ***More than Two-thirds of Trade Mission Meetings Produce Business Leads***

With concrete business leads in place, today Lt. Governor Becky Skillman announced the success of the Central America Trade Mission. The 34-member delegation returned Friday from the six-day mission to Guatemala, Costa Rica and Panama. Lt. Governor Skillman and Congressman Dan Burton led this first American trade mission to the region since Congress ratified the Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA).

“We went to Central America to bring home opportunities for hardworking Hoosiers and I think the follow-up phone calls, trips, and collaborations already planned show a level of success far beyond what we anticipated,” said Lt. Governor Skillman who also serves as Indiana Secretary of Agriculture and Rural Development. “Our goal was to build relationships and lay the groundwork for future economic development. We accomplished those goals and then some. I believe we will have business deals on the table in the next six months. ”

The Indiana delegation, composed of government, commodity organization, academic, food and agribusiness leaders, held as many as 80 meetings as part of the trade mission. More than two-thirds of those meetings already have resulted in plans for follow-up actions. Delegates have begun to forge business relationships by agreeing to send product samples to contacts made in Central America and scheduling return trips to the region. There is even talk of a reverse trade mission from Guatemalan food processors.

The following are two, of many, success stories already in the works:

- In Panama, the Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen’s Association met with a wood products manufacturer specializing in flooring, office and hospitality furniture. The business, headquartered in Panama City, employs 250 people. Among the goals of this business is to diversify its use of American wood species. It was determined that Indiana has the perfect suppliers and species, oak, maple, and walnut, for this company. Dimension requirements were provided to the IHLA’s Ray Moistner. He will put the Panamanian company in touch with Indiana vendors.
- Prior to the delegation leaving Panama, the Guatemalan Food Processors’ Association (GREFAL) contacted Indiana Agriculture Director Andy Miller expressing interest in a reverse trade mission. GREFAL’s Jose Orive encouraged continued open business opportunities, which support small- and medium-sized

entrepreneurs in Guatemala and allow them to enjoy U.S. agricultural products, such as pork and bacon. A reverse trade mission would further grow relationships and identify opportunities between Hoosier businesses and their Guatemalan partners.

Lt. Governor Skillman, Rep. Burton (R-Ind.) and Director Miller met with high-level government leaders including Guatemalan President Oscar Berger and Costa Rican Minister of Agriculture Rodolfo Coto. They discussed CAFTA and the mutual benefits of trade with Indiana. Lt. Governor Skillman was pleased with the positive nature of the conversations. Beyond the relationships built among government and business leaders in Central America, another byproduct of the mission was the collaboration among the delegates.

“After spending a week together, the members of our delegation now are familiar with each others’ businesses, and they are bringing opportunities to each other,” said Director Miller. “This was a unique opportunity to work together for an extended period of time and gather information from each other. I think it will only strengthen Indiana’s effort to grow Indiana agriculture and thereby our state’s economy.”

**Below is a list of those who participated in the Central America Trade Mission:**

Lt. Governor Becky Skillman

Congressman Dan Burton

Andy Miller  
Agriculture Director  
Indiana State Department

Beth Bechdol  
Deputy Director  
Indiana State Department of Agriculture

Rick Wilson  
Congressman Burton's District Director

Mark Walker  
Congressman Burton's Staff Director

Deborah Abbott  
Asst. Director of Communications and Outreach  
Indiana State Department of Agriculture

Matt Harrod  
Manager of International Trade and  
Corporate Development  
Indiana State Department of Agriculture

Ben Ledo  
Special Assistant to Indiana Governor Mitch Daniels

Annie Schmelzer  
Special Assistant to the Deputy Director  
Indiana State Department of Agriculture

Steve Akard  
Indiana Economic Development Corporation

Chris Novak  
Executive Director  
Indiana Corn and Soybean Organizations  
County: Marion

Jim Schriver  
President  
Indiana Soybean Board  
County: Blackford

Matt Gibson  
President  
Indiana Corn Growers Association  
County: Newton

David Hardin  
President  
Indiana Pork Advocacy Coalition  
County: Hendricks

Mike Beard  
Past President  
Indiana Pork Advocacy Coalition  
County: Clinton

Gary Reding  
President  
Langeland Farms, Inc.  
County: Decatur  
Ray Moistner

Executive Director  
Indiana Hardwood Lumbermen's Assn., Inc.  
County: Marion

Rick Haggard  
Garden Center Manager  
Rail Trail Gardens  
County: Boone

Maria Marshall Ph.D.  
Small Business Development  
Purdue University  
County: Tippecanoe

S. Suzanne Nielsen Ph.D.  
Department Head of Food Science  
Purdue University  
County: Tippecanoe

J. Robert Jeffs, Ph.D.  
Executive Director Workforce and  
Economic Development  
Ivy Tech Community College of Indiana  
County: Marion

Rosalind Leeck  
Division Manager  
Demeter Grain, LP  
County: Benton

Eric A. Gloe  
Vice President of Sales and Marketing  
Clabber Girl  
County: Vigo

Steve Smith  
Director of Agriculture  
Red Gold  
County: Madison

Russell L. Yearwood  
Vice President, QA- R&D  
Indiana Packers Corporation  
County: Carroll

Gary Felger  
Marketing Director  
Whiteshire Hamroc  
County: Noble

Michael J. Silver  
Merchandiser  
Kokomo Grain Co, Inc.  
County: Howard

Ed Ebert  
Commercial Manager Oilseed Processing Division  
Bunge, North America  
County: Shelby

Ron Meeusen  
BioCrossroads

Melissa Reese  
Managing Partner  
Ice Miller  
County: Marion

Steve Rudner  
President, Streetview Group  
County: Marion

Terry Anker  
Anthology Venture Fund  
County: Hamilton

Gary Truitt  
Learfield Communications, Inc.  
County: Marion